

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA.
(WESTERN DIVISION.)

Methods Used in Mission Band Work.

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FROM the time of Brainerd and Elliot and Carey down to the missionaries of the present day, the history of every missionary triumph has been preparation by prayer, and so if we would have greater triumphs and greater successes, there must be first of all more prayer.

Prayer for His servants who cross the seas,
Prayer that His sent ones their Lord may please,
Prayer that prevails, while saints on their knees
Wait on the Lord in prayer.

Wanted more prayer, for a Christless world,
Wanted more prayer, more earnest prayer,
Prayer that Christ's banner be kept unfurl'd,
Wanted, believing prayer.

One difficulty that many leaders find is in getting the different members to take part in prayer.

A word to leaders. Do not leave off asking members to take part in this exercise until the hour of the meeting. Ask them weeks ahead, and if it be a country Auxiliary or Band, where you do not see them often, ask them a month or two ahead. It requires quiet meditation to prepare for public ser-

vice. If you ask those who have never taken part in this way before, do not make the request before others. It is apt to cause them to refuse, maybe in a laughing manner, "Oh, I could not do that." Arrange to meet them alone. You may have to put yourself about to do it, but it pays. They may then, not smilingly, but seriously, tell you they cannot. Tell them not to give you a decided answer then, to wait and speak with their Heavenly Father about it first and then to let you know. "If you want anything of your earthly parents, you would not hesitate to ask, why be afraid to ask God, who is more willing to give than we are to ask? You want Him to save those in heathen darkness, to bless His servants who have gone forth in His name? You want Him to increase the usefulness of your Auxiliary or Band? You want Him to use you in His service? Well, just tell Him so, simply." Some such quiet conversation usually leads to the answer, "I'll try." I have heard young girls in our Band begin thus with a sentence prayer, and later I have heard them pray in a way that brought tears to my eyes and made me almost wonder whence their power, though they themselves were unconscious of it.

To Members. When thus approached by your president, go to your closet, shut the door and tell your Heavenly Father your weakness. Ask Him to open your mouth and fill it with suitable words. As you go about your daily duties, whenever the work or the meeting comes into your mind, lift your heart and continue to ask God to help you. Look up instances of prayer in the Bible, and just before starting for the meeting, again go away by yourself. If you will only thus try I need not tell you the results.

Says the late Dr. Henry Foster of prayer :—God has set the power of prayer as one of the chief forces by which He governs this world, so that there is great significance in that requirement, 'Pray always with all manner of prayer and supplication.' While Christ was in the world, it is said He could do no mighty works in various places because there was no faith. Then if we remember that faith and prayer are among the forces by which He proposes to work in the world, we are responsible that we put these forces into operation in the place where we are appointed. Let us remember this as one of the greatest privileges given to the Christian. There is nothing like the privilege of prayer.

At the time of the Boxer persecution, our missionaries, making their way to the coast under the most trying circumstances, wondered often how they could be so calm and quiet in spirit. They understood why, when on reaching the coast, they received the cablegram, "The whole Church is praying for you." Had we realized at the time how much we were adding to their comfort by the way, would we not have been more faithful than we were? Truly we want more faith in prayer.

While as Auxiliaries and Bands, we are organized especially for the study of foreign mission fields, if earnest Bible study found a larger place in our meetings, it would without doubt be productive of much good.

METHODS FOUND USEFUL IN PRELIMINARIES.

A word may be chosen for response to the roll-call, such as joy, service or other Christian attribute ; names by which Christ is called ; miracles from the Old and New Testaments, etc.

A text of Scripture, or part of one, may be selected every

month as a motto. Such as, "The Master is come and calleth for thee"; or good yearly mottoes, such as, "Helping together by prayer," "The Lord hath need of thee" and "My grace is sufficient for thee," different members being asked each month to select these. Those afraid of hearing their own voices in a meeting can do work like this. The texts may be printed on white cardboard and hung up at the meetings.

As a change from the programme committee, slips of paper may be given to different members, assigning them their work for six months; one to select hymns, another the Scripture lesson, response to roll-call, special music, etc., the president keeping a list of all. The work may thus be evenly distributed and easy things given to the timid or to beginners and to girls busy with school work, arranging to give the latter harder work in the holidays. In this way every member has something to do. A look-out committee of two may be appointed for each month to look after absent members.

BIBLE STUDY.

One year our Band took up lessons from the life of Christ. The chapter from which the lesson was taken was announced the previous meeting. Sometimes questions on the lesson were prepared and distributed a week or two in advance, giving time to search the Bible for answers. Last year, every second meeting, the member having charge of the Bible study chose her own subject, sometimes distributing beforehand texts she wished read. The subject fixed on was often in harmony with the motto for the month or the

word chosen for response to the roll-call. Another plan followed was to ask the members to watch carefully the Scripture readings at family worship and private reading. At every alternate meeting they were to come prepared to speak on any verses that had appealed to them particularly during the two months' readings, or give a few thoughts on some of their favorite passages. Some beautiful thoughts were given, others simply read a few of their favorite verses. The life of Abraham formed another subject for study. Members were asked to read certain selected chapters each week, and come prepared to talk and ask questions. A different member was appointed for each meeting to lead in the study and seek to draw out helpful lessons. Another suggested year's study was, "The women of the Bible."

MISSION STUDY.

While thus giving Bible study its due place, Mission studies were not neglected. One year was spent on the New Hebrides. When the year was finished the Band felt as if it could profitably spend another. One of the girls enlarged the map of the New Hebrides and as each island was studied a list of the missionaries was printed on manilla paper and hung up. India formed the topic for another year and was scarcely completed. How some Auxiliaries or Bands can cover a whole country at one meeting is a mystery. Of course it is interesting to get a general idea of all countries and in that way one probably becomes better acquainted with the great need, but in order to become familiar with our missionaries and their work, systematic study is required. First there was given a general

paper on India, dealing with the physical features and social conditions. At subsequent meetings papers followed on the religions of India, the women of India, modern mission work by the Danes, the life of Carey and the influence of the East India Company, followed up by a paper on Alexander Duff, and last of all came our own Canadian Mission, each station in its order.

To each member was given a slip of paper with her name on one side and on the opposite side several texts on prayer together with the name of one of our missionaries in India or China, to be her missionary not only to pray for but to find out all she could about her. This plan has made them more watchful in their reading, and very distressed is the tone sometimes when a member tells you she has not been able to find out anything about her missionary.

OTHER HELPS.

With Mission and Bible study our meetings are as a rule full, but time is sometimes made for latest news from the field, gleaned from *Tidings* or *Record* and other sources. Photographs of missionaries, mission buildings and scenes are cut out of old and new papers and passed around whenever they suit the subject for the meeting.

When there is no way clear to start a missionary library by purchasing books costing one dollar and upwards, it might be found helpful to purchase *Lives of Missionaries*, at five or fifteen cents from our publication department. These smaller books may often be read when a larger one would not. Paste a blank slip in the fly-leaf with "Read By"

on the top and as each girl reads it, let her write her name and pass the book on to someone else.

If there is no one to give a report of the Annual Meeting in June, get printed reports as soon as possible, take extracts from president's address, secretaries' and treasurers' reports and principal papers. Distribute these and have them called for in order by the leader. It is well to keep the young people in touch with all the work.

If meetings are held in the school-room or the church, good use may be made of the blackboard by writing thereon topics for the following month, or any figures or statistics, as one may often take in more by the eye than the ear. Short, pithy sentences, descriptive of the need of various countries, may also be written. The early comers like to read them while waiting for the meeting to begin. It is well for the leader to provide herself with a notebook for jotting down anything which might be helpful for the blackboard. While most of the work is given to the girls to do, the president really requires to have a fair grasp of the work a year ahead.

If in your congregation the young women have disbanded, or if they have left the juvenile Band and have not entered the Auxiliary, will you not seek to band them together in Christian service? If you can be the means of deepening in any way their Christian experience and increasing their missionary interest, if by their efforts one soul in heathen darkness should find the Light of Life, would you count your time spent in vain? Are we in danger of thinking that when we have given a fair contribution our duty to missions is done, forgetting it is not so much our money as *ourselves*

the Lord wants. Do I hear someone say, "But it must take a lot of time"? Yes, it does take time, but to whom does our time and all we have belong? Can we have anything worth while without spending time? And can we, dare we, refuse to spend time and take pains in this work? Untold millions will bow to-day before senseless idols, as they bowed in blindness yesterday, when we forgot about them; as they will bow to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow unless—Can we again forget?

He sat once by the wayside—talking to *one*, He was tired, very tired, but not too tired to care about her sorrows, her shame, to talk to her, to bring her back to God, and we amid life's many claims, who say we follow Him, have we cared for *one* of these in heathen darkness, as Jesus cared that day? Carest thou not? His pierced hand is pointing to the world for which He died. "Carest thou not," He whispers. "Go work *to-day* in My vineyard" is the call.

It comes to thee and it comes to me,
And what, oh, what will the answer be?